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REVIEWS AND ABSTRACTS OF LITERATURE

Der vorchristliche Jesus. WILLIAM BENJAMIN SMITH. 2te Auflage mit Vorwort von PAUL WILHELM SCHMEIDEL. Jena: Eugen Diederichs. 1911. Pp. xxix + 243.

The first edition of this work was published in German in 1905, and since then the author's thesis has received widespread attention all over the christian world. That an American mathematician writing from Tulane University, where Smith is a professor, should defend a thesis in opposition to a whole army of higher critics and receive such widespread, and, on the whole, serious attention from a score or more of them, speaks well for American scholarship in this field.

The kernel of the five essays in the book can perhaps be presented as follows: The original doctrine concerning Jesus, a divinity who emancipates, protects, and heals, was the belief and teaching of a prechristian cult which, between the years 100 B.C. and A.D. 100, more or less enveloped in secrecy and "mysteries," was widespread among the Jews and especially among the Greeks. This doctrine was the original source of christianity, which arose, consequently, from many centers, and not, as a later tradition maintains, from the single center of Jerusalem. Jesus was called "the Nazarene," not from the city of Nazareth (which did not exist at that time), but from the Hebrew meaning of the root of the word, "the keeper" or "guard." His *anastasis* meant originally his installation as "Messiah," "World-Ruler," "Judge of the living and the dead," and so forth; and this was later, by the addition of the supplementary phrase "from the dead," changed into the resurrection. The "two great ideas," the one, imposing, preached by John the Baptist and others, of "One who shall come," and the other, milder and more genial, "of Jesus," were originally different, but were finally united in the world-conquering concept of Jesus Christ. The idea of the seed-sower had to do originally with God's sowing the seeds of the Logos which produced the world, a picture of the origin of the world possessed by prechristian Naasenes (erroneously considered by some to be merely a sect of the christian gnostics). No one knew of Paul's letter to the Romans until the year 160 A.D.

Smith writes, "The Jesus-cult is an historical fact, and indeed the most important historical fact there is for us. In the gospels the Jesus-concept is dominant, and in the other writings of the New Testament the Christ-idea is subordinate to it. . . . Orthodoxy or conservatism says that Jesus was god-man, *echter Gott und zugleich echter Mensch*." For science, however, this notion remains an unthinkable *Unding*. To explain Jesus there are for science but two possible hypotheses. "Either Jesus is a deified man, or he is a humanized god. Like the undulatory theory of light, the first hypothesis is now a very highly developed concept. On it, especially in Germany, three generations of scholars, among them men of genius, have labored with unfaltering zeal. With what result? One must confess, with a negative result. In short, the attempt to explain the appearance of the Jesus-cult, the new gospel, and the chris-

tian propaganda by any conceivable idea of a purely human Jesus, has, in the light of historical criticism, in no respect and in no degree, succeeded. The complete failure of this noble, century-long effort becomes daily more and more obvious. . . . If it were possible to explain the facts in accordance with this hypothesis, German science would long since have done it. . . . I challenge the higher critics to mention a single crucial fact of original christianity which is satisfactorily explained by their theory. . . . The problem can never be solved in this way. . . . Hence we must assume that Jesus is a humanized god, and carefully test whether on the basis of this assumption a view free from contradictions, in which all is in order, can be developed. This is the only scientific method. In it alone can we hope for a final solution of this most important and most interesting of all historical problems." And Smith goes on to maintain that christianity will lose nothing and gain in every way by such a solution.

In the preface of the first edition, Schmeidel announces himself as an opponent of Smith's views, but vouches for the author's scholarly abilities and thorough methods, saying it will be difficult to refute Smith's conclusions. Soon after its publication, however, in a work entitled "Ist das 'liberale' Jesusbild Wiederlegt?" Weinel spends much ink in saying, with very little grace, that Smith does not know what he is talking about. In Drews's "Christusmythe" Schmeidel is criticized for writing the preface to such a book; and Johannes Weiss, in "Jesus von Nazareth Mythos oder Geschichte," writes that Schmeidel "might have done better than, by writing a preface, supply this book with a foil." Schmeidel, in a later article, pleads that he only wished to call the attention of his colleagues to the views of Smith and those who sympathize with him. Pfeiderer, Borinski, von Schnehen, Soltau, Meyboom, Vollmer, Vexler, Picard, and many others have given the book serious attention, some confessing that Smith is no dilettante, that his views must be taken seriously and that they are conceived and presented in the spirit of a profound scholarship. Wernle speaks of "*diesem kaum ernstzunehmenden Buch,*" and by innuendo even casts aspersions on Smith's sincerity. Smith, however, in courteous and cogent replies, gives his critics, as it seems to the present writer, far better than he gets—and the contest is interesting. The many criticisms of the book have not given the author reason for modifying the original text in this second edition.

Meanwhile the discussion has been taken up by liberal journals in this country, Volume XV., for example, of the *American Journal of Theology* containing several articles dealing with different phases of the question.

Smith's method may be exemplified by his treatment of Acts 18: 24-28, where the text seems clearly to imply that an eloquent Alexandrian Jew named Apollos, who was "instructed in the way of the Lord," but "knew only the baptism of John," first learned from Aquila and Priscilla at Ephesus that the "Lord" was the historical Jesus. Thereafter, "he mightily convinced the Jews, publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ."

The importance of the book is evident in the fact that a general ac-

ceptance of its thesis would involve a radical revision of traditional views as to the origin of christianity, and the author writes with the clearness and logical force of one who knows his ground and is willing to tell all that he knows on a great theme.

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The Higher Aspects of Greek Religion. L. R. FARNELL. New York: Scribners. 1912. Pp. 155.

These six Hibbert Lectures were delivered at Oxford and in London in April and May, 1911, and bear the following captions: (1) "General Features and Origins of Greek Religion"; (2) "The Religious Bond and Morality of the Family"; (3) "Family Morality (continued): Tribal and Civic Religion"; (4) "Influence of the Civic System of Religion upon Religious Thought, Morality, and Law"; (5) "Expansion of Greek Religion beyond the Limits of the Polis"; (6) "Personal Religion in Greece."

Readers familiar with Dr. Farnell's admirable work, "Cults of the Greek States," will not need to be told that he is a scholar of conservative temper, accustomed to weigh evidence, and disinclined to substitute hypothesis for ascertained fact except when duly acknowledged. In these days of somewhat wild speculation in matters connected with religion which flourishes under the guise of historical research, it required courage bordering on temerity to pronounce in Oxford and Cambridge, the seats of the most speculative exchanges, discourses so severely and studiously tame as those contained in this volume. Dr. Farnell, to be sure, possesses not only the courage of his convictions, but also a reputation for sound scholarship sufficient to warrant him in thus bearding the lions.

Moreover this mode of treatment is not a manner assumed for effect but the natural expression of the author's fundamental conception, which agrees with the traditional view in holding that Greek religion was mainly a social-political system and that such traces as undoubtedly exist of animism, magic, or initiation-rites, are not of its essence, but more or less adventitious survivals or accretions. Although but yesterday generally accepted, so rapidly have the revolutionists been making headway that to-day it sounds rather heretical to say that Greek religion "is in its earliest period a 'theistic' creed, that is, a worship of personal individual deities, ethical personalities rather than mere nature forces," and that anthropomorphism is its predominant bias. Doubtless those who think otherwise incline to regard Dr. Farnell's views as biased by his preoccupation with the state cults and the Olympian deities to whom they are addressed and his frank subordination of private cults. It is only in the last chapter that he touches on the mysteries, and even then it is the Eleusinian, the most nearly fully adopted by the state of all mysteries, with which he is chiefly concerned. This objection, however, may readily be too much pressed; for if one takes a large view, as Dr. Farnell evidently conceived it his duty to do, it is undoubtedly true that the public cults of the several states, not only by their public character